League of Women Voters of Frederick County, MD
Meeting Notes, November 12, 2024

In attendance virtually: Kate Jones, Rosanne Roe, Nannette Hobson, Lauri Gross, Patti Connor, Mike Bunitsky, Jill Griffith, Sue Kunkel, Susan Rovin.
Call to Order: 6:35 Kate Jones began the meeting.

Minutes: The October 21 Meeting Minutes will be put before the board at its November 18 meeting, since today's meeting lacks a quorum of nine board members, so no motion can be passed.

Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer's Report will also be discussed at the November 18 board meeting.

LWVUS President's Meeting: Sue Kunkel reported on the LWVUS Presidents meeting, where state local presidents talked about the LWVUS President and CEO statements about the November 5 election results and appropriate responses to it. Local League presidents felt we should not take the long view but should be concerned about those more immediately affected and continue to work on the organization's priorities and goals. Rosanne Roe mentioned that she found the CEO's post-election statement recognizing election volunteers and staff bracing, but the focus on women's issues going forward somewhat narrow.

Membership: Kate has signed the league up for the C. Burr Artz Library conference room for 3-6:30pm on November 18. That will give members time to set up for the new member welcome gathering at 3-5pm before the 5pm board meeting. Jill and Kate reviewed the plan for introducing league activities to new members by starting with an introduction, warm-up, and then a brief discussion of the league's dual mission of nonpartisanship and advocacy, its organizational structure, positions and programs, and internet resources. Rosanne suggested that the mission could be stated more simply as voter registration, voter education, and issues advocacy. Kate countered that the introduction should describe the dual nature of the organization as nonpartisan and advocacy to support democracy. One of the important things to clarify for nonmembers is how the league is both nonpartisan and advocates for certain issues. Rosanne suggested that, while the league advocates for issues, it does not support parties or candidates. Patti gave another suggestion that, while the league advocates for women's reproductive rights, for example, this is an issue that is not specific to a party. Lauri suggested that new members need to know about committees and positions, who's in charge, who to contact for a particular activity, the member newsletter, and work on the Voters' Guide and Forums. Kate will do the welcome introduction, and Jill will do the warm-up activity, but will fine-tune it. Jill will also check with Margaret Hindman to see whether she has a role she would like to play for the welcome part of the meeting. Jill did point out that so far only six people have RSVP'd that they're coming, including two new members. Rosanne suggested that the league consider member recruiting and outreach to communities beyond Frederick, such as Brunswick, Urbana, and other towns throughout the county. Kate pointed out that the library talks are part of that effort, but additional promotional work needs to be done to increase awareness of and attendance at these events.

Events: Discussion of fall get-out-the-vote events will occur at the November 18 board meeting.

Voter Services: With Jim Filson absent, discussion about fall forums will occur at the November 18 board meeting. Also, Jim Filson and Mary Beth Coker are moving and may not be able to continue working with the LWVFC. Kate discussed the importance of having deaf interpreters at the Forums, while Sue Kunkel mentioned that hiring them is expensive. Kate also mentioned that the league received a complaint about one of the interpreters. Jill said she would speak with the contracting company, Keystone Interpreting Solutions, about this issue. Kate plans to attend Maryland Deaf Community Center Town Hall and Meeting on November 16 at 1pm at the Ely Auditorium (101 Clarke Street) at the Maryland School for the Deaf Frederick Campus.

Ethics: The league needs a new chair of the Ethics Committee, because Mary Beth Coker is moving.

Website: Kate discussed ensuring easy access to the league's Google drive. Patti said she has trouble accessing it on her phone, which is important because she is frequently away from home. Kate noted that Chapter Spot may offer better options than the Google drive, but she would still like all board members to be able to access the Google drive. Kate discussed the upcoming February 1, 2025, ChapterSpot implementation. She would like all board members to take at least the President's training, which gives an overview of ChapterSpot. The Treasurer, Web Master, and Membership Committee Chairs may need to take some of the other training sessions for ChapterSpot. The LWVUS has some useful PowerPoints and FAQs, as well as special online sessions, to clarify the features and implementation of ChapterSpot. All members will be able to sign into ChapterSpot without a password and can easily change their personal information. Roster Manager will be accessible from ChapterSpot. The league will have to open a Stripe account, which will collect all dues from members. After ChapterSpot is implemented, 33 percent of dues will go to LWVUS, 47 percent will go to LWVMD, and 20 percent will go to LWVFC. Sue Kunkel said that, under ChapterSpot, the LWVFC may come out slightly ahead financially, but that remains to be confirmed. As a 501(c)4, the LWVFC may still receive donations to its Education Fund, but they will not be tax deductible and will be collected into an account and dispensed for appropriate projects at the state level. With ChapterSpot, there will be separate membership and donation links. ChapterSpot can survey new members and will renew memberships on a rolling basis. The last pay-per-member payment will be due in August 2025. After the transition to ChapterSpot, the Treasurer's job will become easier, because the new program will show what the LWVFC's budget is at all times. LWVFC must submit certain documents, such as updated bylaws which the league has, in order to implement ChapterSpot.

FC Delegation Public Forum: Kate mentioned that the Frederick County Delegation will hold its annual public forum on December 7 at 10am in Winchester Hall in Frederick (12 E Church Street). This forum provides the public with an opportunity to provide feedback on legislative matters that impact the county. Participants can either send the delegation materials they intend to present in advance or sign up to present issues on the day of the forum. Margaret Hindman has gathered LWVFC issues to present to the delegation. If anyone has additional issues to present, they should submit them to Kate. Because Kate is unable to attend the December 7 meeting, she would like another board member to attend. Patti Connor mentioned that she and Linda Cohen are developing a paper opposing a bill to authorize electronic voting and clarifying the use of the touch screen/printer voting machines, which cause confusion among in-person voters, because voters think they are voting electronically on a computer. A few other bills supported by the league include the special election bill, Fair Share Act, and the transportation and climate bills. Kate noted that the LWV has excellent advocacy training, including how to testify before a legislature.

Adjourned: 7:45pm Kate ended the meeting.
Submitted by Secretary Rosanne Roe.

League of Women Voters of Frederick County, MD
Meeting Notes, November 14, 2024

In attendance virtually: Kate Jones, Nannette Hobson, Rosanne Roe, George Carroll.
Call to Order: 6:40pm Kate began the meeting.

Discussion: With so few people in attendance, the discussion was a brain-storming session more than a meeting like the November 12 meeting. The discussion focused on setting goals and priorities for LWVFC work on the upcoming mid-terms, which will include many local candidates and a gubernatorial election, as well as upcoming elections for judges, mayor, and aldermen. As one example of the importance of local elections, Rosanne noted that she has a friend who did not vote in the Board of Education primary, when she has grandchildren in the county school system and educating the next generation is so important. Nannette agreed and pointed out that, in addition, a large part of Frederick County tax dollars go to education, so residents should be concerned about how that money gets spent.

While Kate pointed out that the league now has almost 100 members and 26 new members, she needs to confirm how some members should be counted, such as emeritus members for purposes of the ChapterSpot roll assignments. Meeting attendees also discussed the need to expand and broaden membership to include a wide range of participants, including men, African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, LGBTQIA+ members, disabled Americans such as from the deaf community, younger members such as students, people from diverse socio-economic and demographic backgrounds and political beliefs, and people from geographically diverse parts of Frederick County beyond Frederick City.

The sense was that, to prepare for the league's work on local elections and the mid-terms, an effort needs to be made to better understand "our neighbors," especially meeting them in their own communities, including on FaceBook and other social media, HOAs, organizational meetings, and other community settings. The challenge is that there are no longer community gatherings at churches, community halls, or town hall meetings. Rosanne noted that, in Brunswick, many of the churches have closed and thus are no longer centers of social and community life in the town. Nannette pointed out that people want to know how advocating for a particular issue or volunteering for a particular organization are going to help them.

Kate had hoped that the library tables providing voter information and registration, as well as the library talks, would reach more people than the league was able to reach for the 2024 election. But she questioned how much libraries serve as community centers any more. She also wondered whether additional publicity could have helped get more people to these events. Rosanne mentioned that the Brunswick News Journal publisher, Ellis Buress, sent out a notice to his email list regarding Lauri Gross's talk on the Electoral College at the Brunswick Library, which did bring people out for that talk, so maybe more publicity is needed for league library or other activities.

Nannette suggested that what's currently going on with the Frederick County School Board election is a "bellwether" of what may be a trend in Frederick County, where two candidates have been in a very close race as ballots have continued to be counted, one from each party, while two other candidates have already won, but each with very different approaches to education policy (one progressive, one conservative). Although many people are moving to Frederick County from Montgomery County, Frederick County is very different politically from Montgomery County. Nannette believes that many Frederick County residents, especially those who have recently moved from Montgomery County, were blasé about the election and did not vote or bring their eligible teens out to vote. So, in Nannette's opinion, the league needs to return to its most important goal of getting out the vote.

Another issue Nannette brought up was the need to increase Civics education and Rosanne seconded that point, wondering whether Mike Bunitsky might be able to help the league establish some kind high school program where members who are former teachers make classroom presentations on civics or perhaps some other kind of peer-to-peer program. Like the high school voter registration tables, perhaps Mike Bunitsky could coordinate this program with the Frederick County School Board and Board of Elections to get it implemented.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Rosanne suggested, and Nannette and Kate agreed that, in addition to having a mission statement, the league needs to lay out a plan for strategic and tactical goals that can achieve the various objectives discussed at the meeting. But because of limited financial resources, the discussion again returned to the need to recruit new members, to have more sets of hands to accomplish these goals.

At the end of the meeting, George raised a question about the LWVUS CEO's post-election letter, which praised all election volunteer and staff workers; indicated that the election was "marked by integrity, transparency, and high turnout. …While we celebrate a fair and secure election, the outcome…has made the future for women unclear…. from health care and reproductive rights to economic security and equal representation." George pointed out that he felt, in fact, that the election in Frederick County and other Maryland counties has not been completely secure, for example, with a bomb threat emailed to 17 county Board of Elections in the state during post-election ballot counting. In addition, Kate and Rosanne indicated that some of the campaign workers outside the polls in Frederick County were harassing voters standing in line and in one case, the police were called.

As one final note, Kate stated that the agenda is set for the new member and board meetings on Monday, November 18, from 3-6pm. Also, Margaret Hindman and Sarah Matthews have written a history of the LWVFC since the 1970s, when it was first formed, and that will be posted on the league's web site.

Adjourned: 7:30pm Kate ended the meeting.
Submitted by Secretary Rosanne Roe.